

REMARKS

This is a Response to the Office Action mailed June 6, 2006, in which a three (3) month Shortened Statutory Period for Response has been set, due to expire September 6, 2006. Fifty-one (51) claims, including ten (10) independent claims, were paid for in the application. Claims 1-16, 19-21, 24, 30, 32 and 35-51 have been canceled. Claims 17-18, 22-23, 31 and 33-34 are currently amended. No new matter has been added to the application. No fee for additional claims is due by way of this Amendment. The Director is authorized to charge any additional fees due by way of this Amendment, or credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 19-1090. Claims 17-18, 22-23, 25-29, 31 and 33-34 are pending.

Election/Restrictions

In view of Applicant's election of Group II, including claims 16-34, in the Response to Restriction Requirement dated September 14, 2004, Applicant hereby cancels claims 1-15 and 35-51 without prejudice to the filing of any divisional, continuation, or continuation-in-part application.

Objections

Claims 17-18, 22-23, 31 and 33-34 were objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim. As suggested by the Examiner, claims 17-18, 22-23, 31 and 33-34 have been rewritten in independent form to include all limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims. Additionally, claim 17 has been amended to correct an informality noted by Applicant. Claims 17-18, 22-23, 31 and 33-34 are thus allowable. It is noted that in rewriting the claims in independent form, the scope of the claims has not changed and the amendment should not be considered as narrowing the scope of claims 17-18, 22-23, 31 and 33-34.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 16, 19-21, 24, 30 and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 3,823,358 (hereinafter "Rey") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,255,008 (hereinafter "Iwase"), and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,214,484 (hereinafter "Hauer"). Applicant has canceled rejected claims 16, 19-21, 24, 30 and 32 to

achieve earlier patent protection of the subject matter of the allowed claims than would otherwise be available if prosecution of the rejected claims continued. The cancellation of those claims is made without prejudice to pursuing the subject matter of such claims by way of one or more continuing applications.

Conclusion

Applicant thanks the Examiner for allowing claims 25-29, and for indicating the allowable subject matter of claims 17-18, 22-23, 31 and 33-34. In light of the above amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims are allowable. Applicant, therefore, respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider this application and timely allow all pending claims. Examiner Martin is encouraged to contact Mr. Abramonte by telephone to discuss the above, if desired. If the Examiner notes any informalities in the claims, she is encouraged to contact Mr. Abramonte by telephone to expediently correct such informalities.

Respectfully submitted,

Seed Intellectual Property Law Group PLLC



Frank Abramonte  
Registration No. 38,066

FA:lrw

701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 6300  
Seattle, Washington 98104-7092  
(206) 622-4900  
Fax: (206) 682-6031

801178\_1